

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**WHAT IS THE PROPER ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE DECISION TO USE
MILITARY FORCE AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL POWER**

by

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ABSTRACT

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America was created on the principle of self government where by the country is governed by the people. With this significant aspect in mind, leaders of the United States must pay attention to the views and voices of their constituents. Public opinion must be considered in order to preserve this democratic government. An understanding of public attitudes, beliefs and values is important if leaders are to persuade us with their rhetoric, but they must also have a good grasp of public opinion dynamics - the interaction of media and public opinion, the notion that different channels of communication have different effects on audiences, and the like.

This research paper explores the history and dimensions of public opinion. It reviews past influences such as the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, and will finish with a look at current issues. This paper concludes that public opinion is an extremely important aspect of foreign policy but the final decisions lie in the hands of the professionals, our governmental representation.

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In researching a definition of public opinion it became evident that it would not be an easy, clear cut task. Social scientists tend to define the term to suit their own purposes.² The meaning of public opinion is always changing depending upon the context in which the term is used. Public opinion is essential to politics and democracy. For the purpose of this paper, the definition used will be; the shared opinions of a collection of individuals on a common concern.³

It is important to study public opinion for several reasons. First, policy in democratic states should rest on public opinion.⁴ The mere definition of democracy is "rule by the people." Although the United States does not have a "pure" democracy but a representative form, it is still crucial to the success of a democratic government that the people be heard. The representatives are responsible to the people they represent therefore the opinions of the public need to be addressed. It is also important to determine, through public polls, if the public is satisfied with their representatives. It is crucial that all government, local, state, and federal, are constantly aware that the decisions and policies they make effect their constituents' daily lives and their constituents opinions must be considered. If trust in government is low or if a large segment of the population does not believe that their congressional representatives are responsive to their needs, a democratic state may deteriorate: voting rates may decline dramatically, and demagogues might emerge with rather undemocratic ways of "fixing" the

system.⁵ This has happened within some Islamic communities in the past as well as other countries. Although U.S. polls have shown that Americans have been critical of government actions, it has never been so turbulent as to warrant the disintegration of democracy.

Secondly, respect for public opinion is a safeguard against demagoguery.⁶ In any government, there is always the possibility that a person or group of people will rise up and attempt to overthrow the government. This can be done much more easily if the public is disenchanted with the existing government. Paying attention to and appreciating public opinion can be one decisive way of deterring this movement.

Public opinion can also be funneled to remove unwanted officials from office or at least make them accountable for their actions. Public outcry is a strong and powerful tool that directs elected leaders and keeps them focused on the electorates they serve.

Thirdly, public opinion provides clues about culture.⁷ Understanding public opinion on policy and social issues is crucial to students of American culture because understanding popular sentiment toward specific issues gives us insight into larger currents in American life.⁸ Since it is difficult to study all aspects of a culture, it is necessary to draw conclusions from their lifestyles and responses to surveys on particular social issues. These surveys can help predict future trends and societal attitudes.

Public opinion must, at times, be mobilized.⁹ There are instances when the way the public responds to a situation is directed by the government. This is true especially during a national crisis requiring military action. The public is asked to support the mission by sending loved ones on the deployment, volunteering their time, or conserving national resources.

Public opinion dictates the bounds of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁰ The leaders of the United States, our country's foreign policy makers, take into consideration the public's beliefs, values, and attitudes when formulating policies. They realize there are some foreign policy tactics that the American people will oppose. In these instances, it is helpful to review public reactions to previous foreign policy decisions.

Those leaders who are responsible for addressing foreign policies are usually the experts in this area and have much more knowledge in this field than the common citizen. Although there is a need to address public opinion in foreign matters. It is in the United States' best interests that it be left to the professionals who have the knowledge, background, and detailed information to base their decisions.

History

To better understand present day attitudes concerning public opinion, we need to look back in history to better comprehend the basics. It is important to examine how things got to be the way they are. Secondly, if we search through history we can get a better understanding of how citizens will react to contemporary issues derived from prior responses.

One reason opinion polling became so popular in America is because George Gallop and others were so concerned with the way dictators-like Adolph Hitler-attempted to speak for the people instead of letting them express their own opinions.¹¹ The surge to gauge public opinion was a response to the threat of dictatorships.

In the 1700's, three of the Founding Fathers, Alex Hamilton, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson engaged in a debate over the role of public opinion in the United States. Each had viewed the public in a different light. Hamilton felt the public in general was uneducated and ill informed concerning the government and political actions. He also believed that the majority could be easily swayed by those with power and money. Hamilton felt the public could not be trusted and that government should be run by the few who were educated and had good social positioning. He concluded that the government should be controlled by the few, rather than the many, and should make all the decisions because they are better informed, more consistent, and more stable in their judgment.¹²

Madison agreed with Hamilton and felt the public, those who had property and those who had none, were so divided by conflicting interests that they could not be trusted with public decisions.¹³ He felt the public could not come together for their own benefit.

Jefferson saw the public in quite a different light than Madison and Hamilton. He saw the people of the U.S. as responsible and able to form a strong public. Jefferson viewed farmers, those on which the nation rests, to be the most significant residents. "They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds," according to Jefferson.¹⁴ He also considered the U.S. citizens as an asset to the nation and felt certain that they possessed the ability to govern themselves.

James Bryce (1838-1922), a British jurist and historian, wrote *The American Commonwealth* which was a classic study of American society. He found public opinion in America differed from Europe. In Europe it was substantially "the opinions of the class that wears black coats and lives in good houses," whereas in the United States, "the wishes and views of the people prevail even before they have been conveyed through the regular law-

appointed organ.¹⁵ It is likely that the rest of the world saw the US as being run by public opinion.

The beginning of the 20th Century brought with it new forms of communication through the arrival of the modern mass media. 1896 was a year of great progress in the information surge. In England, the world's first mass circulation daily newspaper, The Daily Mail, was founded which catered to the new generation of educated and literate working people.¹⁶ Since more common people were becoming educated, their pay increased as well as their leisure time which left room for social involvement. The cinematograph made its debut in Paris which became the most potent means of mass communication in the first half of the 20th Century and the wireless telegraph by Guglielmo Marconi followed shortly thereafter. In one year, the most dominant means of mass communication, press, radio, and film changed the communication world. These inventions gave millions the opportunity to become more involved, educated citizens who were capable of developing their own opinions based on the new sea of information.

During the first two decades of the 20th Century, American writers on public opinion emphasized two major ideas: the need for a consensus to exist before there could really be any public opinion, and the general inability of the average citizen to have an informed opinion on policy questions.¹⁷ A.L. Lowell wrote *Public Opinion and Popular Government*, one of the most influential books on public opinion.¹⁸ He believed that public opinion must be a consensus of the people not just the people voicing their opinions. For public opinion to exist, he argued, "a body of men need to agree upon the ends and aims of government and upon the principles by which those ends would be obtained."¹⁹ Lowell maintained that two conditions needed to exist: the minority would need to concede to the majority and abide by it on their own with no arm bending; Furthermore, in a complete democracy, the submission of the minority had to be ungrudging.²⁰

Walter Lippman, a journalist, is another who analyzed the theory of public opinion. He wrote that the workings of the government are too intricate for the common citizen to fully understand and they do not possess the skills to grasp all the aspects of matters pertaining to the government, no matter how advised they were. During this time, public opinion was looked at as a functioning part of society but not studied as a serious tool of governing.

The 1930's brought the study of public opinion into a new light. It began to be seen as a part of science, a measurable instrument. New technology made it possible to collect and analyze data. Private enterprise encouraged these developments and gave way to the rising

business of polling. The mass media helped popularize the concern for public opinion and made the names Gallup, Harris, and Roper household names.²¹

It was during this time that the study of the government branched out into the field of political science. Political science concerned itself with scientific methods of studying politics which led to the area of public opinion studies. The 1930's launched the assessing of public opinion as a scientific venture. As evidence of this growth, the first article on public opinion in *The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* appeared in 1933; the first edition of the Smith-Lasswell-Casey bibliography on public opinion came out in 1935; the *Roper Fortune* poll and the Gallup American Institute of Public Opinion (AIOP) were established in 1935; and the Public Opinion Quarterly began publication in 1937.²²

Even though this time in history led to the validity of polling, it does not mean it was widely accepted. There were many philosophers who did not trust the science of polling. Even still, polling became accepted as a means to grasping public opinion. Despite its acceptance, the question still remained about the nature of the public and its role in government. After overcoming some initial resistance, concern for public opinion has come to be accepted as an integral feature of democracy in the United States and a legitimate part of social and political science.²³

Not only has there been controversy concerning the polling process but through history there has been conflicting ideas on how public opinion and the political process in a democracy should work. On one hand you have the believers who maintain that for a true democracy you need the citizens acting on their own behalf. That is, the public needs to attend meetings, vote, and be active in the governing process. This type of government, referred to as participatory, is based on the people's self-governing. On the other hand, advocates of a representative democracy believe the duties of governing should lie with professionals who are experts in the field of politics and elected by the people. These entrusted individuals act on the citizens' behalf.

People on either side of this debate have opposing ideas of the role of public opinion in democratic governance. The participatory advocates want a government based on public opinion where representative advocates want a government that is shielded from the unaware and ill-informed.

Much public opinion research reveals that most individuals know and care little about politics.²⁴ Although polls may show that the majority of people feel strongly in favor of a particular event, it does not mean that they are fully aware of the matter or specific details of the issue at hand. It is important to realize that just because an opinion poll sways one way or

another it does not mean that those polled actually have an interest. The skeptics of the public's ability to be enlightened on political matters argue that a well-functioning pluralist political system requires that only a small portion of the polity be mobilized at any given time; therefore, we need not worry about the lack of political sophistication of the masses and the general failure of the public to participate in politics.²⁵

In a representative democracy there are elections and political parties that help reduce the need for citizens to be overwhelmed by the details of specific policy issues. Elections limit the choices so the voters can concentrate their efforts on specific candidates and issues. Elections give the public a chance to have a voice in the direction of local and national leadership. They also provide an awareness of pressing political issues. Political parties help citizens focus on the general idea of each party instead of having to know about all the minute details of specific reforms, bills, policies, etc. In other words, political parties and elections help simplify the job of the electorate.

Consensus about democratic values keeps our democratic system stable. However, important differences of opinion among major social groups and doubts about the ability of citizens with very limited interest in public issues to govern a nation raise questions about how public opinion should be integrated into the democracy.²⁶

Through this debate on what level of public interaction in the political process is "enough", we find ourselves asking the question, "What sort of public opinion is worthy of becoming public policy?" Glynn suggests at least three standards for considering public opinion come to mind: (1) People must have adequate knowledge of the political issues at stake, (2) people must deliberate on these issues, weighing arguments on all sides, to arrive at thoughtful opinions and (3) people's conclusions must respect crucial democratic norms such as minority rights and free speech, and they should work toward the common good as well as toward people's personal interests.²⁷

The question then becomes, "If the public does not meet this criteria, is it possible to have a fully functioning democratic government?" Most political theorists believe it is. In a representative democracy, the elected are entrusted with the job of making decisions for the good of its people. Still, a well informed, active community helps to identify what that community deems important and what issues it views as crucial. A vital link to expanding the knowledge and ideally the accuracy of an issue to the electorate is the mass media.

Mass Media Influence on Public Opinion

According to Lippman, the media, at their best, gives us representations, pictures of an outside world we do not directly see or experience. Ideally, radio, television, print, and most recently the internet, will provide its followers with quality, unbiased information by reporting researched facts so the public can utilize it to make decisions and form opinions. One must remember that someone or some group is behind the release of this information that may have their own agendas.

Most people claim that they get their news from the television rather than the newspaper. Although recent evidence shows people over report their reliance on television as their main source of news.²⁸ Watching television or listening to the radio news is a more passive form of attention. While newspaper reading takes more concentration and the reader comprehends at their own pace which increases retention and comprehension. By taking advantage of all media outlets on a regular basis you can be well informed and capable of making educated decisions on political issues.

The mass media not only can influence people on specific issues but they have the ability to influence what issues the public deems as important. In its most basic form, the evidence shows that for the most major public issues, most of the public begins to pay attention after they have been reported in newspaper and television.²⁹ Bernard Cohen, political scientist, stated, "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."³⁰

How much the public is interested in events and issues is for the most part proportional to how much news coverage the issues get.³¹ Once an event finds itself a top issue in the media, it also becomes an issue discussed among citizens. The media lends itself to communication among its readers and through public consideration and discourse, opinions are shaped and voiced.

It is also commonplace for organized interest groups - including corporations and government agencies and other elites - to try to influence the press and by that the public agenda.³² Even though we rely on the media to report impartially, or at least to sift through the mounds of information and report credible material, the stories still come from sources with their own motives. For instance, a politician may call the press to inform them of detrimental information he discovered about his opponent. Is this news, yes, but the information was told for specific purposes, to benefit his own popular standing by making his opponent look bad.

There is an overload of information on a daily basis that we are bombarded with from the media. It is impossible to take on all the issues at the same time and give them all equal

attention. We, as a nation, choose to take time with the issues that have a direct impact on our lives.

Why is it that during the Somalia deployment not every American could regurgitate particulars about this issue? It received plenty of news and media coverage to warrant public attention. It was a national military involvement but not high on every American's priority list. The United States' involvement in Somalia did not affect every American the same. Those who had loved ones deployed had more vested in the Somalia operation and paid closer attention to the details and daily activity. Although public opinion is a vital part of democracy and foreign policy, does not mean that just because every American does not possess detailed knowledge on all political issues that public opinion is any less important.

Public Opinion and Somalia Peacekeeping Efforts

A good example of the interaction of public opinion and foreign policy would be the US involvement in humanitarian efforts in Somalia from 1991 to 1993. The US's involvement with Somalia dates back to the 1970's when the Carter administration decided it would be in the best interest of the US to establish a relationship with Somalia. This relationship was sought to counter Soviet interests in the Middle Eastern oil. The National Security Council felt it was a strategic move in the battle of the superpowers. In an agreement in 1980, Somalia agreed to grant the U.S. access to air and seaport facilities in return for economic and military aid.

The 1980's turned out to be a decade of upheaval for Somalia. The ruling military led government, the Siad Barre regime, fearing loss of power and anticipating rebellious factions within Somalia, and with few options to strengthen his weakening political base, began a protracted and savage war against his own people.³³ Factions were fighting each other and there were raids against the regime. By 1991, the conditions in Somalia were declining. The Barre military regime was still inflicting harm on its own citizens, raping, robbing, and killing those who refuse to cooperate. Barre finally fled Mogadishu in early 1991, which toppled the recognized government. Conflict between and among clans erupted in a civil war that claimed more than 200,000 Somali lives by early 1992.³⁴ The living conditions were strenuous, there had been floods and drought in some Somali regions, and hunger was a major problem. The images of this reached the American people through the media. The pictures of starving Somalia children were displayed on televisions across the United States and the American people petitioned for government action.

With images of a humanitarian disaster displayed daily in practically every media outlet, and with congressional and public criticism increasing, White House attention focused on

Somalia shortly after the 1992 elections. In November 1992, President Bush determined that U.S. military intervention was the only way to safely administer famine relief and Operation Restore Hope was instituted. The United States' role was that of a humanitarian effort with a plan for the United Nations to take over peacekeeping operations after the U.S. restored sufficient order and the famine was under control. The United States' main objective was to clear roads, restore communication systems and ensure that food was getting to the targeted population.

According to a poll conducted prior to the beginning of Operation Restore Hope, 81% of public opinion believed that Bush was "doing the right thing in sending troops to Somalia to make sure food gets to the people," and 70% believed that sending troops was even "worth the possible loss of American lives, financial costs, and other risks."³⁵ A routine National Security Council (NSC) review of policy during February 1993, confirmed the general consensus among senior policy makers that "things were proceeding rather well": famine and faction fighting were under control, public support remained high, and "no one" in the White House foresaw any major problems in the transfer of responsibility for military operations to a UN peacekeeping force.³⁶

As U.S. intervention continued, troops were taking on a more nation building role than that of humanitarian. But with the new rule, there were no direct policy guidelines from the White House. This was due to what critics say was Clinton's close attention to a domestic agenda and inattentive foreign policy. The Somalia mission gained Washington's attention in July 1993 when Mohamed Farah Aidid's military force killed 24 Pakistani soldiers on a UN patrol. This was the beginning of the conflict between United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM II) and Mohamed Aidid, United Somali Congress (USC) clan leader.³⁷ The Pentagon authorized the involvement of the Quick Reaction Force in a series of retaliatory strikes against Aidid, and on August 26 an elite force of U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos known as Task Force Rangers were deployed which undertook a series of failed missions to capture Aidid.³⁸

October 3-4, 1993 became a devastating period for American troops and the American people. Eighteen American were killed and seventy-eight wounded at the hands of Aidid's militia.³⁹ American helicopters were shot down, one soldier taken hostage, and the body of a Special Operations Aviator was drug through a Mogadishu street. Rising popular discontent turned into popular outrage in the aftermath of these events.⁴⁰

During the ten months preceding the events of Oct. 1993, polling data measuring popular approval of the president's handling of the Somali crisis declined from a high 77% at the beginning of the Clinton administration to 51% in June and 41% in September.⁴¹ Popular

outrage prompted congressional demands for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. "The people who are dragging American bodies don't look very hungry to the people of Texas," explained Senator Phil Gramm (R-Texas) "Support for the president in the country and congress is dying rather rapidly."⁴²

In an October 7, 1993, televised address, Clinton relayed to the American public the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Somalia. The primary reason for the dramatic shift in administration policy was rising public and congressional pressures to withdraw forces from Somalia regardless of the consequences.⁴³ The attitudes of the American public turned from unsatisfied to total outrage after the October atrocities. According to the polling data, Clinton's approval rating for his handling of the Somali crisis fell to a low of 31%, with only 33% of those polled favoring the continued deployment of U.S. troops.⁴⁴

Since the withdrawal of U.S. troops and UN sponsored forces, Somalia has still experienced clan-based conflicts that have resulted in the loss of thousands of Somali's. Media coverage of this is basically non-existent since the U.S. redeployment potentially leaving the Americans with the erroneous assumptions that peace has returned to the Horn of Africa.⁴⁵ There is no public outcry for the Somali people now even that little have changed since America's first intervention. It is no longer a priority for the U.S. public and this is reflected by the lack of media attention or vice-versa.

The longer a crisis with a significant humanitarian component remains unresolved, the greater is the possibility that U.S. involvement (or lack of involvement) will become the concern of increasing numbers of congresspersons and other interested individuals outside the executive branch. This is especially true if an issue becomes the focus of popular opinion.⁴⁶

In this regard, neither Bush's decision to launch Operation Restore Hope nor Clinton's decision to withdraw troops was decided in a vacuum. In each of these cases, public opinion had become increasingly critical and disenchanted with established policies over several months.⁴⁷ Although domestic discontent formed the back drop of policy and in some sense restrained the range of choices available to Bush and Clinton, both White House decisions nonetheless demonstrated the importance of presidential politics in understanding the final policy choice.⁴⁸

It is hard to see how the United States' foreign policy could avoid having a humanitarian edge. If the president did not put it there, American voters, watching the ghastly events on CNN, soon would.⁴⁹ Although it took the American government months to get involved in the humanitarian efforts in Somalia, it only took four days to withdraw due to public outpouring. As mentioned previously, 70% of those polled believed that sending troops was even "worth the

possible loss of American lives." Yet, as soon as lives were lost, the American people were outraged and Clinton made his decisions based on public emotions.

That is what makes the Somalia precedent so worrisome as we look at what is happening with the handling of Iraq today. If the United States abandons its own security interests as the standard by which to decide whether to use military force, there is virtually no limit to the possible arenas in which American lives may be sacrificed. Washington will have foreign policy determined by emotions. Where and when we intervene will be determined by television images of suffering or the lobbying skills of foreign political factions, not the relevance of the stakes to the security of the American republic.⁵⁰

The debate over these issues as you can see, is not a new one. It continues to take place generally along two axes: one concerns the distinction between practical considerations, the other concerns the realist-liberal dimension. Representative democracy is built upon the notion that public opinion underpins public policy. The reality of this remains an empirically open question and the real role of public opinion in the formulation of foreign, security and defense policy can be, and often has been, questioned. While most students of foreign policy agree that the willingness and ability of democratic governments to involve their military in international conflicts will indeed be affected in some way by public opinion, the implications of this have always been controversial.

From a normative perspective, the role public opinion ought to play in the formulation of foreign policy can therefore also be questioned, sometimes challenging the ideals of representative democracy. Although the sensitivity to political response fully corresponds to democratic ideals, it has often been questioned, for instance, whether it would be wise for governments to pay more attention to the opinion and demands of the population when it comes to foreign and security policy decisions.

Public opinion has only played a minor role in considerations of national security policy research. Yet politicians clearly seem to respect, fear and try to manipulate public opinion. Academics and politicians alike seem to feel that the role of public opinion in security matters is of relatively minor importance, but the pragmatic politicians are much more concerned with the general mood of the issue or hot button. In an indirect manner, this mood does seem to influence policy decisions, even though our government was designed for inefficiencies to prevent rapid change based on emotions.

The interaction among beliefs and events, on the one hand, can weaken the ability of the structure of belief to shape policy orientation. As an example, in Germany Juhász found that ideology is linked to pacifist persuasion, but when we move to concrete military deployments the

connection between ideology and agreement becomes less clear. One reason for this blurring might be the fact that most out-of-area military missions were framed as humanitarian aid, which is presumably supported by everybody.⁵¹

On the other hand, two well known Ph.D's in the political science field, Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, examining both hypothetical and actual crisis situations; find that political opinions concerning the use of force are based on complex dispositions, involving at least two of the three motives stipulated in their framework. This complexity can explain the resistance to change at the individual level. A multidimensional structure provides public opinion with a greater degree of underlying stability than a one- or even two-dimensional structure. While it is certainly possible to distort public opinion in the short term, such efforts are not likely to change underlying perceptions of the international environment or orientations towards basic foreign policy goals or strategies, and may even be counterproductive in the long term.

In other words, as Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, argue in their paper, little or no opinion change has occurred after the end of the Cold War because there has been no significant change in the underlying structure of opinions.⁵²

Progress on the issue of impact of public opinion on policy making lags relatively behind. This area is methodologically the most complex in view of the variety of factors and actors to be taken into account.

Relevant factors in explaining the different roles of public opinion include the nature of the political system, the role played by mass media, and the nature of the issue (use of force, peacekeeping versus war, and so on).

The decision of the NATO allies to rely on air power alone, with the corresponding number of innocent civilian casualties in Serbia, was, among other things, motivated by an assumption or perception that public opinion would not support a war in which the risk of military casualties on the allied side was anything but minimal.⁵³

The current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan has forcefully reminded us once again of the role and significance of public opinion, alleged or real, in decision-making concerning war and peace and the use of military force in particular.

Yet, of the major policy areas, national security seems to be the one least influenced by public opinion. One major point of agreement in the vast literature on national security and foreign policy is that the role of public opinion is marginal compared to political, military and economic factors. Public opinion is often considered a residual category which must be kept in mind, but need not be made the center of attention.

The Iraq conflict, therefore, not only raised profound questions of prudence and statecraft, but also disturbing questions about their moral implications. Iraq is, however, only the most recent example of the difficulties democratic systems face when dealing with the twin tensions of peace and justice in the post-Cold War world.

The Gallup Poll dated 12 October 2005 asked "If leaders of our nation followed the views of the public more closely, do you think the nation would be better off, or worse than it is today?" The answer was 73% said better off and 2% had no opinion. The true test for the public's feeling on the military in Iraq will be the 2006 elections, Sanford Gottlieb writes in the Army Times, Dec 2005

The elections in a democratic society are the voice that the people have to inform their elected leaders of what issues they consider important to them. The uncertain issues like Iraq should become a platform for the politicians to run on this fall.

Conclusion

The leaders of every state -- and certainly every democracy -- must be concerned with the support of the public for their policies. It is the public that will ultimately enjoy or suffer the fruits of the policy. The political leadership of any democratic regime will stand for election in the not too distant future. These factors make the leadership more attentive to public opinion than in other types of regime.

Those who speak out publicly are generally knowledgeable about the issues and their opinions should matter, but not exclusively. How people become informed and how well informed they become are two important facets of public opinion. When discussing the impact of public opinion on foreign policy, it is of the utmost importance, to remember that the experts are generally those who hold the positions in the government and have more information available to them about a foreign or domestic issue than the average citizen who is responding to public opinion polls. In addition, one must remember that opinion polls might not necessarily generate the "true" voice of the public. It is in the best interest of the American people to use public opinion to help weigh decisions, but not use public opinion to base a decision.

The people of the United States should be heard and their voice recognized in the policies created for the American people and with foreign countries. This nation was contrived on the principles of democracy in which we recognize "rule by the people" and the rights of individuals to elect their own representation. Once the public speaks, they need to be heard, counted, acknowledged, and considered in the decision making process.

Endnotes

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